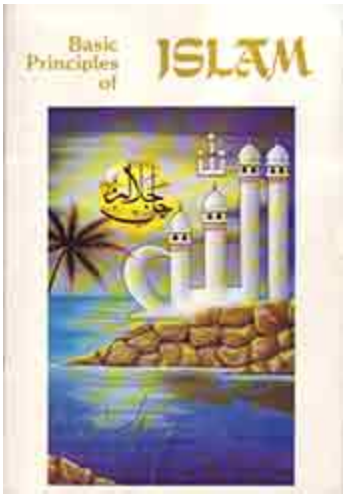
THE DIFFERENT ARABIC VERSIONS OF THE QUR'AN

By Samuel Green

INTRODUCTION

Many Muslims have told me there is only one Qur'an, and that it has been perfectly preserved, and that all Qur'ans around the world are identical. They have said to prove that the Qur'an is superior to the Bible. Maybe a Muslim has said this to you, or maybe you are a Muslim and have said this to others?



It is common for Muslims to believe this because this is what Islamic leaders teach.

> No other book in the world can match the Qur'an [...] The astonishing fact about this book of ALLAH is that it has remained unchanged, even to a dot, over the last fourteen hundred years. [...] No variation of text can be found in it. You can check this for yourself by listening to the recitation of Muslims from different parts of the world. (*Basic Principles of Islam*, p. 4)

The above claim is that all Qur'ans around the world are identical and that "no variation of text can be found". In fact the author issues a challenge saying, "You can check this for yourself by listening to the recitation of Muslims from different parts of the world". In this article I will take up this challenge and see if all Qur'ans are identical.

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- Appendix 2 - Are the qira'at different versions?
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HISTORY

We begin by turning to an Islamic encyclopedia. This scholar explains an important aspect of the history of the Qur'an. Please read this quote a few times if you are new to this area of study.

> Historically speaking, after the definitive recension of the Koran made at the command of the

> Caliph 'Uthman, certain variant readings existed and, indeed, persisted and increased as the Companions who had memorised the text died, and because the inchoate Arabic script, lacking vowel signs and even necessary diacriticals to distinguish between certain consonants, was inadequate [...] In the 4th Islamic century, it was decided to have recourse to "readings" (*qira'at*) handed down from seven authoritative "readers" (*qurra'*); in order, moreover, to ensure accuracy of transmission, two "transmitters" (*rawi*, pl. *ruwah*) were accorded to each. There resulted from this **seven basic texts** (*al-qira'at as-sab'*, "the Seven readings"), each having two **transmitted versions** (*riwayatan*) with only minor variations in phrasing, but all containing meticulous vowel-points and other necessary diacritical marks. [...] The authoritative "readers" are:
>
> **Nafi`** (from Medina; d. *169*/785)
> **Ibn Kathir** (from Mecca; d. *119*/737)
> **Abu `Amr al-`Ala'** (from Damascus; d. *153*/770)
> **Ibn `Amir** (from Basra; d. *118*/736)
> **Hamzah** (from Kufah; d. *156*/772)
> **al-Qisa'i** (from Kufah; d. *189*/804)
> **Abu Bakr `Asim** (from Kufah; d. *158*/778)
> (Cyril Glasse, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, 'Qira'ah', 4th ed. 2013, p. 436, bold added)

Therefore, the third caliph, Uthman, made a standard text of the Qur'an, and how this is recited has been passed down from men called the "readers" (Arabic: qurra'). The readers/qurra' were famous reciters of the Qur'an from the early centuries of Islam. The way these men recited the Qur'an was formally recorded in textual form by other men called the "transmitters".

There are more readers and transmitters than those listed above. The table below lists the ten commonly accepted readers, their transmitted versions, and their current area of use.

The Reader	The Transmitter	Current Area of Use
"The Seven"		
Nafi`	Warsh	Algeria, Morocco, parts of Tunisia, West Africa and Sudan
	Qalun	Libya, Tunisia and parts of Qatar
Ibn Kathir	al-Bazzi	
	Qunbul	
Abu `Amr al-'Ala'	al-Duri	Parts of Sudan and West Africa
	al-Suri	
Ibn `Amir	Hisham	Parts of Yemen
	Ibn Dhakwan	

Hamzah	Khalaf	
	Khallad	
al-Kisa'i	al-Duri	
	Abu'l-Harith	
Abu Bakr `Asim	Hafs	Muslim world in general
	Ibn `Ayyash	
"The Three"		
Abu Ja`far	Ibn Wardan	
	Ibn Jamaz	
Ya`qub al-Hashimi	Ruways	
	Rawh	
Khalaf al-Bazzar	Ishaq	
	Idris al-Haddad	
Abu Ammaar Yasir Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'aan*, 1999, p. 199.		

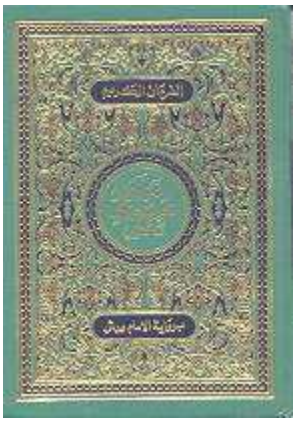
This means there are many transmitted versions of the Qur'an. These are called "readings" (Arabic: qira'at), and each is its own unique recitation. If you recite or read the Qur'an it will be according to one of these qira'at/readings. Each of these has its own chain of narrators (isnad) like a hadith, and like hadiths, some are accepted while other rejected. We will now compare two of these Qur'ans.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN TWO ARABIC QUR'ANS

The Qur'an on the left is now the most commonly used Qur'an. It is the 1924 Egyptian standard edition based on the qira'a of Imam Hafs. The Qur'an on the right is according to Imam Warsh and is mainly used in North Africa.

When we compare these Qur'ans we see five main types of differences between them.

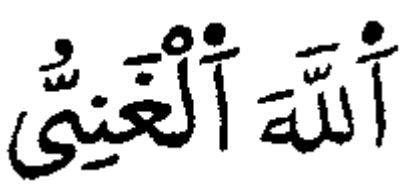
1. Extra Words
2. Graphical/Basic Letter Differences
3. Diacritical Differences
4. Vowel Differences
5. Basmalah Difference



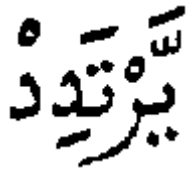
The following examples are scans of the same word/s in the same verse from these two Qur'ans. On some occasions the verse number differs because the two Qur'ans number their verses differently. There is a slight

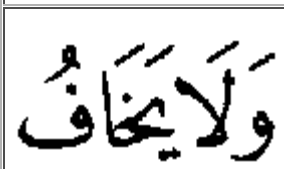
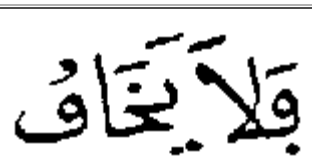
difference in script as well: the letter Qaaf in the Warsh Qur'an is written with only one dot above, and the Faa has a single dot below. This is the orthography of the North African (Maghribi) Arabic script.

EXTRA WORDS

THE QUR'AN ACCORDING TO THE QIRA'A OF IMAM HAFS	THE QUR'AN ACCORDING TO THE QIRA'A OF IMAM WARSH
Allah huwa l-ghaniyu Allah is the self-sufficient, Q57:24	 Allah l-ghaniyu Allah, the self-sufficient, Q57:23
The Hafs qira'a has an extra word, *huwa*, in this verse. This makes the grammar different between these two Qur'ans. In the Hafs qira'a it is a sentence, *Allah is the self-sufficient*. While in the Warsh qira'a it is a phrase, *Allah, the self-sufficient*. Both Qur'ans are expressing the same idea but are doing it in different ways and as a result are recited differently.	
wasaari'uu And hasten to, Q3:133	saari'uu Hasten to, Q3:133
The Hafs qira'a has the extra word *waw* (and). This does not change the meaning of the verse but does change the way it is recited.	

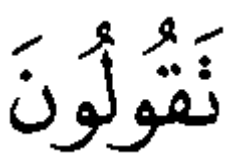
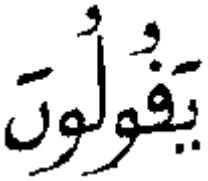
GRAPHICAL/BASIC LETTER DIFFERENCES

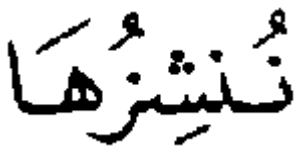
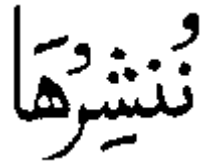
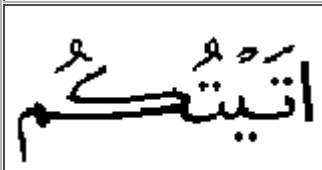
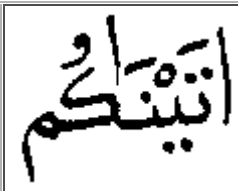
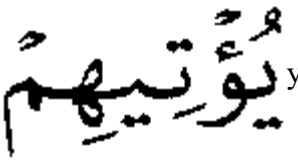
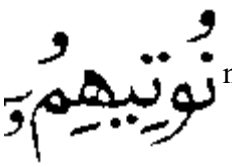
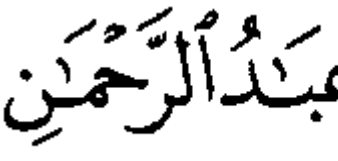
THE QUR'AN ACCORDING TO THE QIRA'A OF IMAM HAFS	THE QUR'AN ACCORDING TO THE QIRA'A OF IMAM WARSH
wawassaa And Ibrahim enjoined on his sons, Q2:132	wa'awsaa And Ibrahim instructed/made his sons, Q2:131
The Hafs qira'a is a 2nd form verb, while the Warsh qira'a has an extra alif to make a 4th form verb. This intensifies the meaning of the verb and changes how it is recited.	
yartadda turn back, Q5:54	 yartadid turn back, Q5:56
The two words are recited differently but have the same meaning. They are two different examples of the 8th form jussive verb. This is most likely a difference in dialect.	

qaala He said, "My lord knows", Q21:4	qul Say: My lord knows, Q21:4
In the Hafs qira'a *qaala* is the perfect tense and therefore Muhammad is the subject of the verb, but in the Warsh qira'a *qul* is the imperative and therefore the subject is God who is commanding Muhammad/ Muslims. This difference is repeated in 21:112.	
 walaayakhaafu and for him is no fear, Q91:15	 falaayakhaafu therefore, for him is no fear, Q91:15
There are different letters at the beginning of these words. This changes the connection from "and" to "therefore".	

DIACRITICAL DIFFERENCES

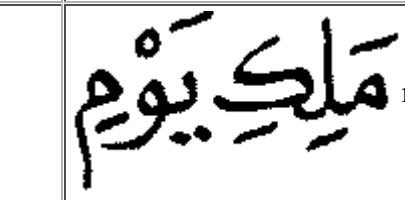
Arabic uses dots (i'jam) to distinguish certain letters that are written the same way. For instance the basic symbol represents five different letters in Arabic depending upon where the diacritical dots are placed: *baa'*, *taa'*, *thaa'*, *nuun*, *yaa'*. Here we see another difference between these two Qur'ans; they do not have the dots in the same place. The result is that different letters are formed.

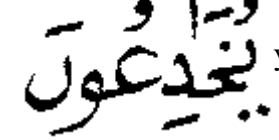
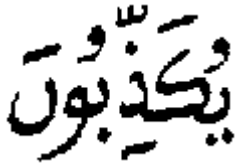
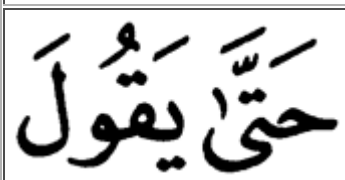
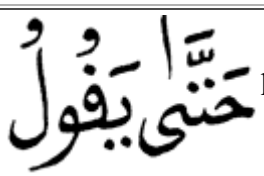
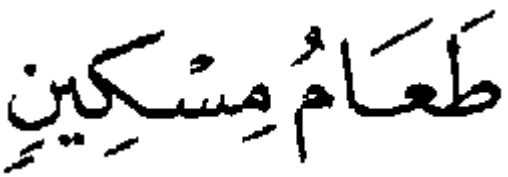
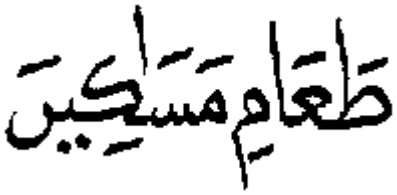
THE QUR'AN ACCORDING TO THE QIRA'A OF IMAM HAFS	THE QUR'AN ACCORDING TO THE QIRA'A OF IMAM WARSH
nagfir we give mercy, Q2:58	yughfar he gives mercy, Q2:57
There are different letters at the beginning of these words. This difference changes the meaning from "we" to "he".	
 taquluna you (plural) say, Q2:140	 yaquluna they say, Q2:139
There are different letters at the beginning of these words. This difference changes the meaning from "you" to "they".	

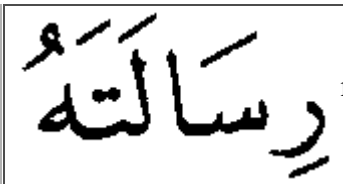
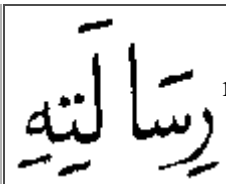
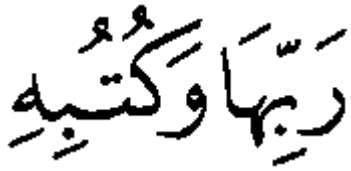
 nunshizuhaa we shall raise up, Q2:259	 nunshiruhaa we shall revive/make alive, Q2:258
There are different root letters in these words and this makes two different words. The two words have a similar meaning but are not identical.	
 ataytukum I gave you, Q3:81	 ataynakum We gave you, Q3:80
There are different letters in the middle of these words. This difference changes the meaning from "I" to "we".	
 yu'tiihim he gives them, Q4:152	 nuutiihimuu we give them, Q4:151
There are different letters at the beginning of these words. This difference changes the meaning from "we" to "he".	
 hum `ibadu l-rahmani they are slaves of the Most Gracious, Q43:19	hum `inda l-rahmani they are with the Most Gracious, Q43:19
The middle letter of the middle word is different in these verses. This changes the meaning of these words significantly: In the Hafs qira'a the word is a noun and means *slaves* while in the Warsh qira'a the word is a preposition and means *with*. Thus, the verses have a different meaning.	

VOWEL DIFFERENCES

Arabic uses small symbols (tashkil) above and below the letters to indicate some of the vowels of a word. Here we see another difference between these two Qur'ans; they do not use the same vowels in the same place.

THE QUR'AN ACCORDING TO THE QIRA'A OF IMAM HAFS	THE QUR'AN ACCORDING TO THE QIRA'A OF IMAM WARSH
maaliki yawmi	 maliki yawmi

Owner of the Day, Q1:4	King of the Day, Q1:3
The Hafs qira'a has a long *alif* which makes an active participle meaning *owner*, while the Warsh qira'a is a nominal noun meaning *king*.	
yakhda'uuna they deceive, Q2:9	 yukhaadi'uuna they seek to deceive, Q2:8
There are different vowels on the first and second letters of these words. The Hafs qira'a is a 1st form of the verb, while the Warsh qira'a is a 3rd form.	
yakdhibuuna they lie, Q2:10	 yukadhdhibuuna they were lied to (or) they deny, Q2:9
There are different vowels on the first and second letters of these words. The Hafs qira'a is a 1st form of the verb, while the Warsh qira'a is a 2nd form either active or passive. (Note: this word appears twice in this verse.)	
 hatta yaquula so that they said, Q2:214	 hatta yaquulu until they said, Q2:212
There is a different vowel on the last letter. The *fatha* vowel used in the Hafs qira'a places the verb into the subjunctive mood which gives the preceding particle *hatta* the meaning *so that*. The Warsh qira'a uses the *damma* vowel which places the verb into the imperfect indicative mood which gives the particle *hatta* the meaning *until*.	
 ta'aamu miskiinin a redemption by feeding a poor man, Q2:184	 ta'aami masakiina a redemption by feeding poor men, Q2:183
There are several different vowels in these words. These change the noun from singular to plural; and hence changes the number of men you are required to feed to redeem yourself for failing to fast.	
qatala And many a prophet fought, Q3:146	qutila And many a prophet was killed, Q3:146.
There are different vowels in these words. These change the meaning from the active to the passive and thus changes the meaning of the verse.	

 risaalatahu his message, Q5:67	 risaalatihi his message, Q5:69
There are different vowels on the last two letters of these words. These change the case and pronunciation of the word. The Hafs qira'a is in the accusative case while the Warsh is in the genitive. This reflects a different understanding of the grammar of the sentence.	
sihraani two works of magic, Q28:48	saahiraani two magicians, Q28:48
There are different vowels on the first two letters of these words. These change the word from an active participle in the Hafs qira'a to a noun in the Warsh and thus changes the meaning of the verse.	
 rabbiha wa kutubihi her lord and his books, Q66:12	rabbiha wa kitabihi her lord and his book, Q66:12
There are different vowels used for the word *kitab* (book). This difference makes the word plural in the Hafs qira'a and singular in the Warsh qira'a. This slightly changes the meaning of the verse because in the Hafs qira'a Mary believes in all of God's books, while in the Warsh qira'a she believes in the book that is with her.	

THE NUMBER OF DIFFERENCES

We have now considered four types of differences between these two Qur'ans: extra words, differences in letters, diacritical dots and vowels, but how many of these differences are there between these two Qur'ans? There are Islamic reference books that answer this question. The title page below is from a book entitled, "The Readings and Rhythm of the Uthman (Qur'anic) Manuscript".

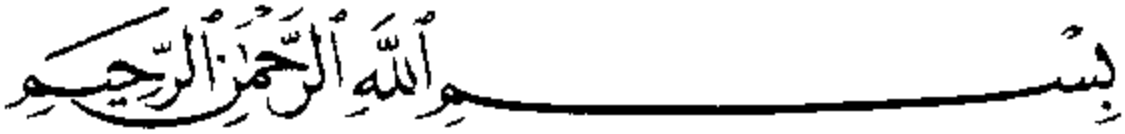
In this book the author displays the text of the Hafs Qur'an but underlines any word where there is a difference among the readers. This difference is then shown in the margin. The author has used a colour coded system to show which reader is different. If the variant word in the margin is red this indicates that the reader was Imam Warsh. Please study the page below and identify the underlined words and then the corresponding colour coded words in the margin.

When the red coded differences are counted there are found to be 1354 accepted differences between the Hafs and Warsh Qur'ans.

BASMALAH DIFFERENCES

There is another type of difference between these two Qur'ans, the Basmalah. The Basmalah is the phrase, "In the Name of Allaah, the Ever-Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy". Both the Hafs and Warsh Qur'ans have the Basmalah at the start of every surah except surah 9. However, while both these Qur'ans have the Basmala, it is understood in very different ways. For Imam Hafs, the Basmalah was part of the revelation and the first verse of each surah, while for Imam Warsh, the Basmalah was not the first verse but added like the surah titles. Abu Ammaar Yasir Qadhi explains this.

> The *basmalah* is the phrase that occurs at the beginning of each *soorah* of the Qur'aan, except for *Soorah* at-Tawbah, and reads, as every Muslim knows,



'Bismillaah ar-Rahmaan ar-Raheem'
(In the Name of Allaah, the Ever-Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy).

> There is a difference of opinion amongst the scholars of the Qur'aan over whether this phrase is to be considered as a verse at the beginning of each *soorah*, in particular *Soorah* al-Faatihah, or whether this is merely a phrase said for blessings between the *soorahs*, and is meant to identify where one *soorah* ends and the next begins.
>
> The scholars are agreed that the *basmalah* does not form part of *Soorah* at-Tawbah, and that it is a verse of the Qur'an in 27:30 [...] but disagree as to its status at the beginning of the other *soorahs* [...]
>
> The scholars who claim that the *basmalah* at the beginning of the *soorahs* is a verse of the Qur'aan, (include) Imaam ash-Shaafi'ee (d. 204 A.H.) (and) Imaam Ahmad (d. 241) [...] However, those that do not hold the *basmalah* at the beginning of the *soorahs* to be a part of the Qur'aan (include) Imaam Maalik (d. 179) (and) Aboo Haneefah (d. 150 A.H.) [...]
>
> Based on this classic difference of opinion, the *qira'aat* (the Readers) themselves differ over whether the *basmalah* was a verse in *Soorah* al-Faatihah and the other *soorahs*. Among the *Qaarees* (the Readers), Ibn Katheer,'Aasim and al-Kisaa'ee were the only ones who considered it to be a verse at the beginning of each *soorah*, whereas the others did not. (Abu Ammaar Yasir Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'aan*, pp. 157-158.)

This is significant for three reasons: first, there is no consensus as to where each surah begins. Second, Islamic scholars do not agree on what words are actually part of the Qur'an. Third, the Basmalah appears 113 times at the start of the surahs and has 4 words, which means there are 452 extra words in the Qur'an according to Imam Hafs than the Qur'an of according to Imam Warsh.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE DIFFERENCES AFFECT THE MEANING

I am often told by Muslims that the differences between these Qur'ans are only a matter of dialect, accent or pronunciation, and do not affect the meaning, however, this is not the case. The examples given earlier show that the differences are more significant: they change the subject of the sentence, whether the verb is active or passive, singular or plural, how the grammar of the sentence is to be understood, and whether or not the Basmalah is even part of the revelation at the start of each sura. These are differences in meaning not dialect.

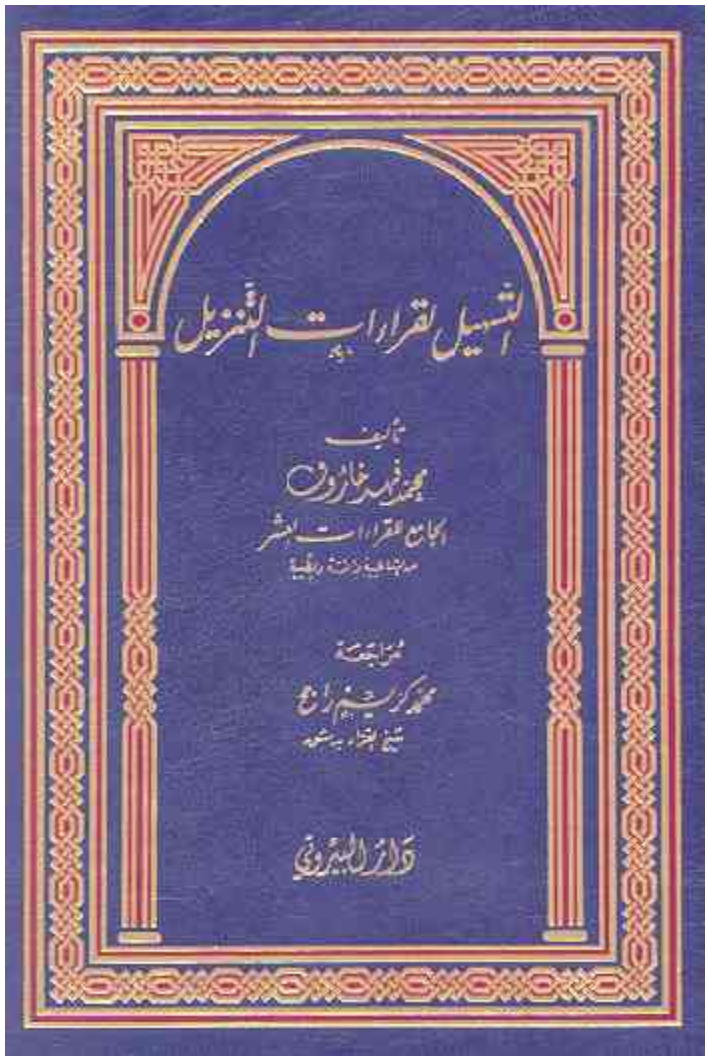
Subhii al-Saalih[1] summarizes the differences into seven categories.

1. Differences in grammatical indicator (i`raab).
2. Differences in consonants.
3. Differences in nouns as to whether they are singular, dual, plural, masculine or feminine.
4. Differences in which there is a substitution of one word for another.
5. Differences due to reversal of word order in expressions where the reversal is meaningful in the Arabic language in general or in the structure of the expression in particular.
6. Differences due to some small addition or deletion in accordance with the custom of the Arabs.
7. Differences due to dialectical peculiarities.

Therefore, the claim that these differences are just a matter of dialect and do not affect the meaning is false.

COMPARING MORE ARABIC QUR'ANS

Our investigation so far has only considered two different Qur'ans, but as we saw at the beginning of this article there are many others that could also be examined. The book below does this. It is a Qur'an that lists the variants from the ten accepted readers.



Translation

Making Easy the Readings of What Has Been Sent Down

Author
Muhammad Fahd Khaaruun
The Collector of the 10 Readings
From al-Shaatebeiah and al-Dorraah and al-Taiabah

Revised by
Muhammad Kareem Ragheh
The Chief Reader of Damascus

Daar al-Beirut

In this edition of the Qur'an, Muhammad Fahd Khaaruun has collected the variants from among the ten accepted readers and included them in the margin of the 1924 Egyptian edition of the Hafs Qur'an. These are not all the variants, just the variants of the ten accepted readers. As the title of his book suggests this makes it easy to know what the variant readings are because they are clearly listed. Below is a page from this reference Qur'an. You can see the variant readings listed in the margin. There are approximately 3000 variants.

الجزء الثالث — سورة البقرة

وَمَآ أَنفَقْتُم مِّن نَّفَقَةٍ أَوْ نَذَرْتُم مِّن نَّذْرٍ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ
يَعْلَمُهُۥ ۗ وَمَا لِلظَّٰلِمِينَ مِنْ أَنصَارٍ ﴿٢٧٠﴾ إِن تُبْدُوا۟
ٱلصَّدَقَٰتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِىَ ۖ وَإِن تُخْفُوهَا وَتُؤْتُوهَا ٱلْفُقَرَآءَ
فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ وَيُكَفِّرُ عَنكُم مِّن سَيِّـَٔاتِكُمْ ۗ
وَٱللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٢٧١﴾ ۞ لَّيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَىٰهُمْ
وَلَٰكِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَهْدِى مَن يَشَآءُ ۗ وَمَا تُنفِقُوا۟ مِنْ خَيْرٍ
فَلِأَنفُسِكُمْ ۚ وَمَا تُنفِقُونَ إِلَّا ٱبْتِغَآءَ وَجْهِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ
وَمَا تُنفِقُوا۟ مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ
﴿٢٧٢﴾ لِلْفُقَرَآءِ ٱلَّذِينَ أُحْصِرُوا۟ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ
لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْبًا فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ يَحْسَبُهُمُ
ٱلْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَآءَ مِنَ ٱلتَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُم بِسِيمَٰهُمْ
لَا يَسْـَٔلُونَ ٱلنَّاسَ إِلْحَافًا ۗ وَمَا تُنفِقُوا۟ مِنْ خَيْرٍ
فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ بِهِۦ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٧٣﴾ ٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمْوَٰلَهُم
بِٱلَّيْلِ وَٱلنَّهَارِ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِندَ
رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٢٧٤﴾

٤٦

(٢٧١) ﴿فنعمّا﴾ ابن عامر، وحمزة، والكسائي، وخلف.
﴿فنِعِمّا﴾ ورش، وابن كثير، وحفص، ويعقوب.
﴿فنِعْمَا﴾ قالون، وأبو عمرو، وشعبة، بخلف عنهم، وأبو جعفر. وباختلاس كسرة العين: قالون، وأبو عمرو، وشعبة، وهو الوجه الثاني لهم.
(٢٧١) ﴿هي﴾ وقف يعقوب بهاء السكت.
(٢٧١) ﴿فهو﴾ قالون، وأبو عمرو، والكسائي، وأبو جعفر.
﴿فهُو﴾ الباقون، ووقف يعقوب بهاء السكت.
(٢٧١) ﴿ونكفّر﴾ نافع، وحمزة، والكسائي، وأبو جعفر، وخلف.
﴿ونكفِّرُ﴾ ابن كثير، وأبو عمرو، وشعبة، ويعقوب.
﴿ويُكفِّرُ﴾ الباقون.
(٢٧١) ﴿سيئاتكم﴾ لورش

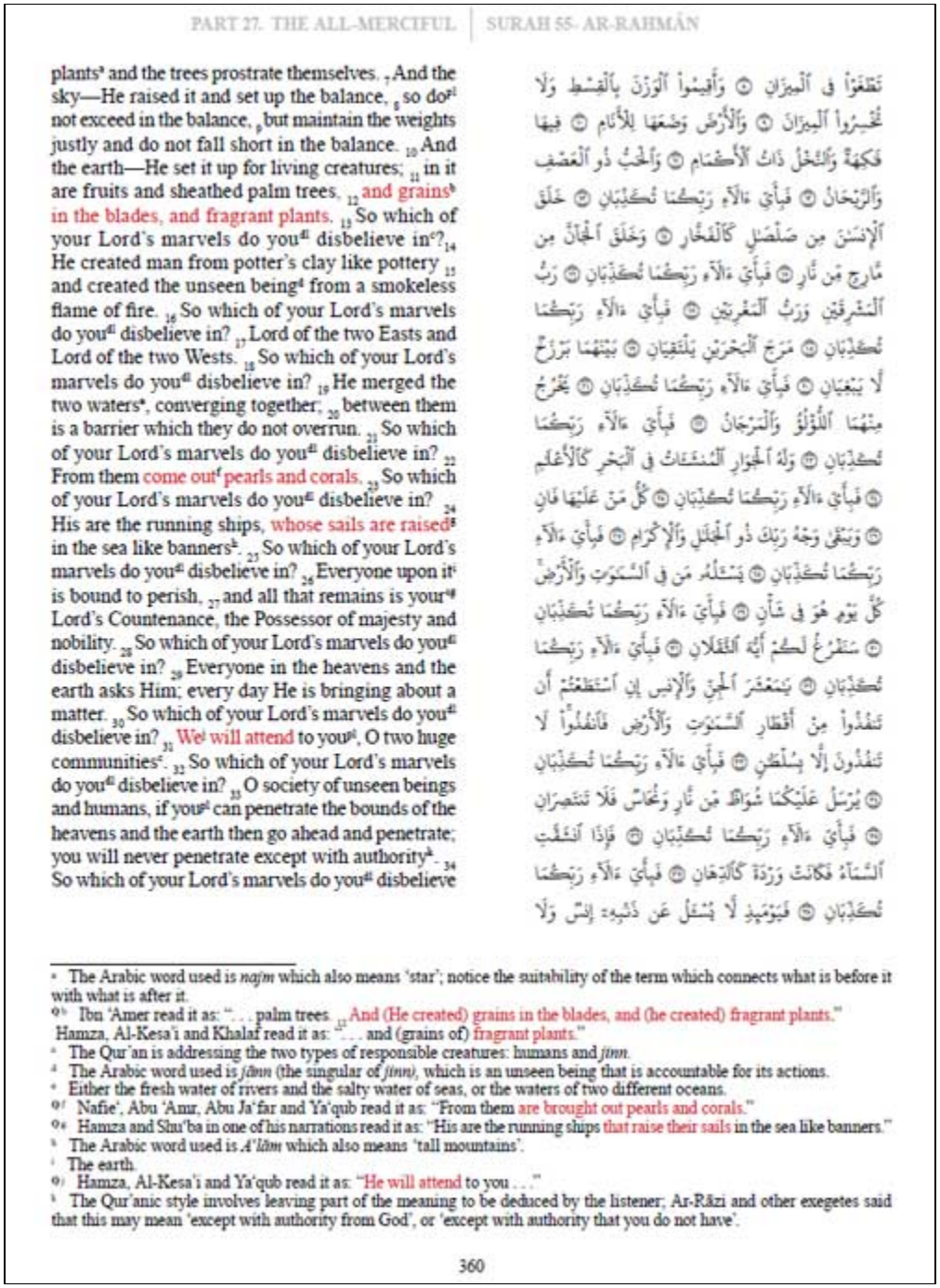
ثلاثة البدل، ووقف حمزة بإبدال الهمزة ياء خالصة ﴿سيِّئاتكم﴾.
(٢٧٢) ﴿فلأنفسكم﴾ بالتحقيق، وبإبدال الهمزة ياء خالصة، وقف حمزة ﴿فلِيَنْفُسكم﴾.
(٢٧٣) ﴿يحْسَبُهُم﴾ ابن عامر، وعاصم، وحمزة، وأبو جعفر. ﴿يَحْسِبُهُم﴾ الباقون.
(٢٧٤) ﴿ولا خوفٌ عليهِم﴾ يعقوب. ﴿ولا خوفٌ عليهُم﴾ حمزة. ﴿ولا خوفٌ عَليهِم﴾ الباقون.

الممال

﴿أنصار، النهار﴾ أبو عمرو، ودوري الكسائي، وبالتقليل ورش.
﴿هداهم﴾ حمزة، والكسائي، وخلف، وقللها ورش بخلفه.
﴿بسيماهم﴾ حمزة، والكسائي، وخلف، وقللها أبو عمرو، وورش بخلفه.

There is now available an English translation of the Qur'an which includes a translation of approximately 30% of the variants between the ten accepted qira'at. Here is the cover and a sample page. The variants are displayed in red with alternative readings in the footnotes. When these are counted there is found to be 965 variants. To purchase this Qur'an see Appendix 9.

لِيَدَّبَّرُوٓا
BRIDGES
ترجمة جسور لقراءات القرآن الكريم العشر
Bridges' Translation of the Ten
Qira'at of the Noble Qur'an
FADEL SOLIMAN



PART 27. THE ALL-MERCIFUL | SURAH 55. AR-RAHMĀN

plants[a] and the trees prostrate themselves. ₇And the sky—He raised it and set up the balance, ₈so do[a1] not exceed in the balance, ₉but maintain the weights justly and do not fall short in the balance. ₁₀And the earth—He set it up for living creatures; ₁₁in it are fruits and sheathed palm trees, ₁₂and grains[b] in the blades, and fragrant plants. ₁₃So which of your Lord's marvels do you[d1] disbelieve in[c]? ₁₄He created man from potter's clay like pottery ₁₅and created the unseen being[d] from a smokeless flame of fire. ₁₆So which of your Lord's marvels do you[d1] disbelieve in? ₁₇Lord of the two Easts and Lord of the two Wests. ₁₈So which of your Lord's marvels do you[d1] disbelieve in? ₁₉He merged the two waters[e], converging together; ₂₀between them is a barrier which they do not overrun. ₂₁So which of your Lord's marvels do you[d1] disbelieve in? ₂₂From them come out[f] pearls and corals. ₂₃So which of your Lord's marvels do you[d1] disbelieve in? ₂₄His are the running ships, whose sails are raised[g] in the sea like banners[h]. ₂₅So which of your Lord's marvels do you[d1] disbelieve in? ₂₆Everyone upon it[i] is bound to perish, ₂₇and all that remains is your[e1] Lord's Countenance, the Possessor of majesty and nobility. ₂₈So which of your Lord's marvels do you[d1] disbelieve in? ₂₉Everyone in the heavens and the earth asks Him; every day He is bringing about a matter. ₃₀So which of your Lord's marvels do you[d1] disbelieve in? ₃₁We[j] will attend to you[k], O two huge communities[c]. ₃₂So which of your Lord's marvels do you[d1] disbelieve in? ₃₃O society of unseen beings and humans, if you[c1] can penetrate the bounds of the heavens and the earth then go ahead and penetrate; you will never penetrate except with authority[k]. ₃₄So which of your Lord's marvels do you[d1] disbelieve

تَطْغَوْا۟ فِى ٱلْمِيزَانِ ۝٨ وَأَقِيمُوا۟ ٱلْوَزْنَ بِٱلْقِسْطِ وَلَا
تُخْسِرُوا۟ ٱلْمِيزَانَ ۝٩ وَٱلْأَرْضَ وَضَعَهَا لِلْأَنَامِ ۝١٠ فِيهَا
فَٰكِهَةٌ وَٱلنَّخْلُ ذَاتُ ٱلْأَكْمَامِ ۝١١ وَٱلْحَبُّ ذُو ٱلْعَصْفِ
وَٱلرَّيْحَانُ ۝١٢ فَبِأَىِّ ءَالَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ۝١٣ خَلَقَ
ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ مِن صَلْصَٰلٍ كَٱلْفَخَّارِ ۝١٤ وَخَلَقَ ٱلْجَآنَّ مِن
مَّارِجٍ مِّن نَّارٍ ۝١٥ فَبِأَىِّ ءَالَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ۝١٦ رَبُّ
ٱلْمَشْرِقَيْنِ وَرَبُّ ٱلْمَغْرِبَيْنِ ۝١٧ فَبِأَىِّ ءَالَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا
تُكَذِّبَانِ ۝١٨ مَرَجَ ٱلْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيَانِ ۝١٩ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخٌ
لَّا يَبْغِيَانِ ۝٢٠ فَبِأَىِّ ءَالَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ۝٢١ يَخْرُجُ
مِنْهُمَا ٱللُّؤْلُؤُ وَٱلْمَرْجَانُ ۝٢٢ فَبِأَىِّ ءَالَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا
تُكَذِّبَانِ ۝٢٣ وَلَهُ ٱلْجَوَارِ ٱلْمُنشَـَٔاتُ فِى ٱلْبَحْرِ كَٱلْأَعْلَٰمِ
۝٢٤ فَبِأَىِّ ءَالَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ۝٢٥ كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ
۝٢٦ وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو ٱلْجَلَٰلِ وَٱلْإِكْرَامِ ۝٢٧ فَبِأَىِّ ءَالَآءِ
رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ۝٢٨ يَسْـَٔلُهُۥ مَن فِى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ
كُلَّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِى شَأْنٍ ۝٢٩ فَبِأَىِّ ءَالَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ
۝٣٠ سَنَفْرُغُ لَكُمْ أَيُّهَ ٱلثَّقَلَانِ ۝٣١ فَبِأَىِّ ءَالَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا
تُكَذِّبَانِ ۝٣٢ يَٰمَعْشَرَ ٱلْجِنِّ وَٱلْإِنسِ إِنِ ٱسْتَطَعْتُمْ أَن
تَنفُذُوا۟ مِنْ أَقْطَارِ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ فَٱنفُذُوا۟ لَا
تَنفُذُونَ إِلَّا بِسُلْطَٰنٍ ۝٣٣ فَبِأَىِّ ءَالَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ
۝٣٤ يُرْسَلُ عَلَيْكُمَا شُوَاظٌ مِّن نَّارٍ وَنُحَاسٌ فَلَا تَنتَصِرَانِ
۝٣٥ فَبِأَىِّ ءَالَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ۝٣٦ فَإِذَا ٱنشَقَّتِ
ٱلسَّمَآءُ فَكَانَتْ وَرْدَةً كَٱلدِّهَانِ ۝٣٧ فَبِأَىِّ ءَالَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا
تُكَذِّبَانِ ۝٣٨ فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَّا يُسْـَٔلُ عَن ذَنۢبِهِۦٓ إِنسٌ وَلَا

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[a] The Arabic word used is *najm* which also means 'star'; notice the suitability of the term which connects what is before it with what is after it.
[b1] Ibn 'Amer read it as: "... palm trees. ₁₂And (He created) grains in the blades, and (he created) fragrant plants."
Hamza, Al-Kesa'i and Khalaf read it as: "... and (grains of) fragrant plants."
[c] The Qur'an is addressing the two types of responsible creatures: humans and *jinn*.
[d] The Arabic word used is *jānn* (the singular of *jinn*), which is an unseen being that is accountable for its actions.
[e] Either the fresh water of rivers and the salty water of seas, or the waters of two different oceans.
[f1] Nafie', Abu 'Amr, Abu Ja'far and Ya'qub read it as: "From them are brought out pearls and corals."
[g1] Hamza and Shu'ba in one of his narrations read it as: "His are the running ships that raise their sails in the sea like banners."
[h] The Arabic word used is *A'lām* which also means 'tall mountains'.
[i] The earth.
[j1] Hamza, Al-Kesa'i and Ya'qub read it as: "He will attend to you ..."
[k] The Qur'anic style involves leaving part of the meaning to be deduced by the listener; Ar-Rāzi and other exegetes said that this may mean 'except with authority from God', or 'except with authority that you do not have'.

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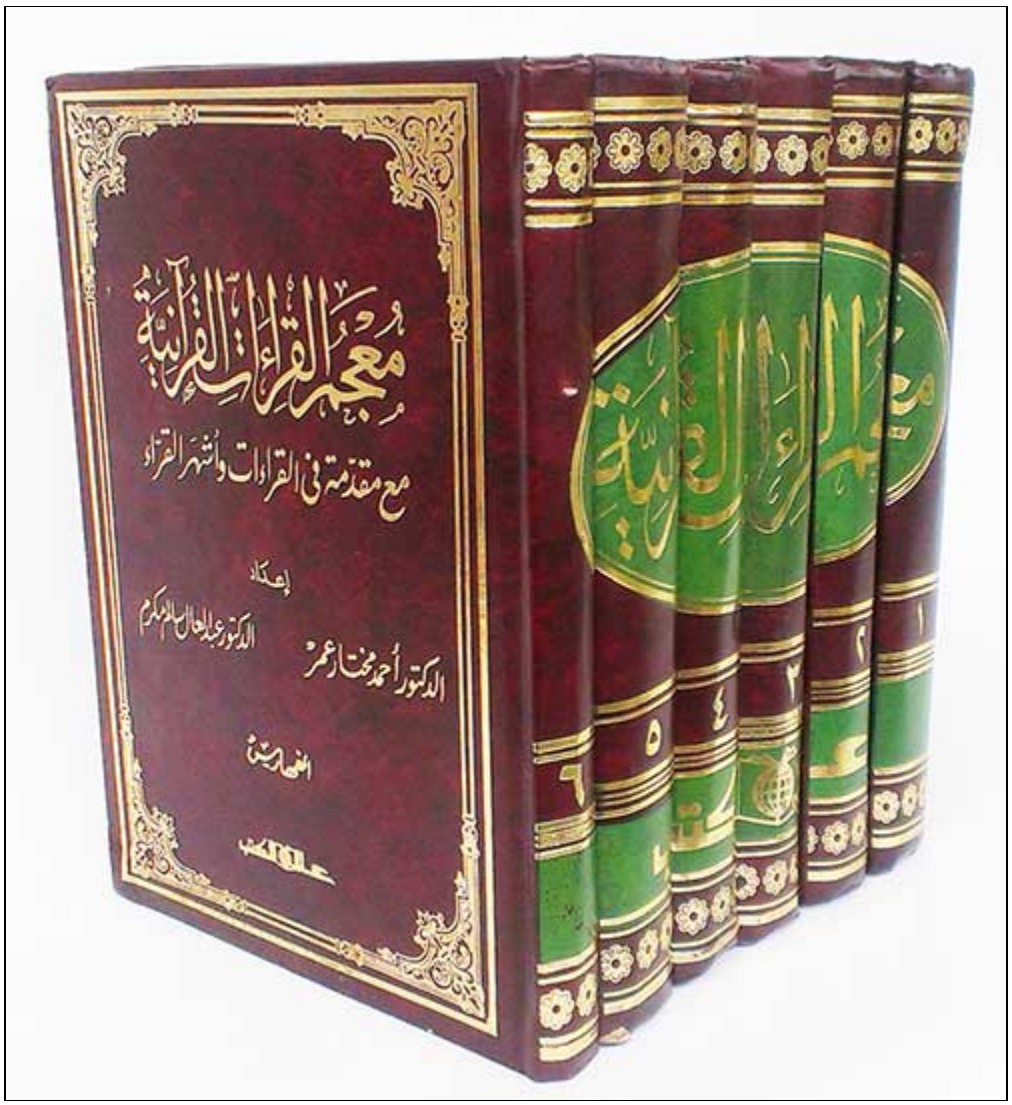
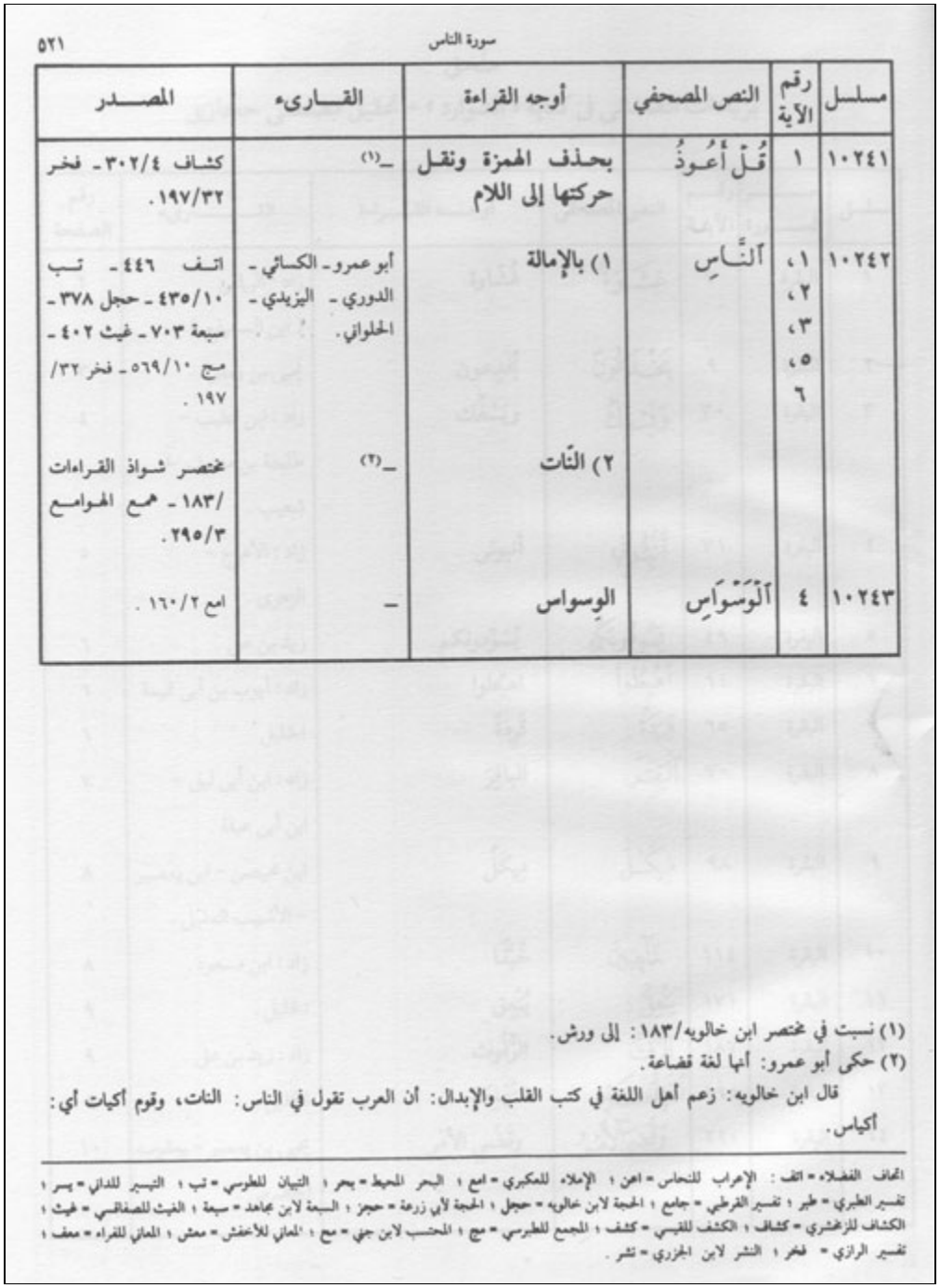
There are more variants than those of the ten accepted qira'at. Below is a six volume encyclopedia set which records most of the known variants. It is entitled: *Mu'jam al-qiraa'aat al-Quraaneeyah, ma'a maqaddimah fee qiraa'aat wa ashhar al-qurraa* (The Encyclopedia of the Quranic Readings with an Introduction to Readings and Famous Readers).



The page below is from this encyclopedia and shows the variants for the last sura of the Qur'an. The column on the right tallies the total number of variants listed for all suras. It states 10243 variants.[2]



٥٢١ سورة الناس

مسلسل	رقم الآية	النص المصحفي	أوجه القراءة	القـــارىء	المصـــدر
١٠٢٤١	١	قُلْ أَعُوذُ	بحذف الهمزة ونقل حركتها إلى اللام	ـ(١)	كشاف ٤/٣٠٢ ـ فخر ٣٢/١٩٧.
١٠٢٤٢	١، ٢، ٣، ٥، ٦	ٱلنَّاسِ	١) بالإمالة	أبو عمرو ـ الكسائي ـ الدوري ـ اليزيدي ـ الحلواني.	اتـف ٤٤٦ ـ تـب ١٠/٤٣٥ ـ حجل ٣٧٨ ـ سبعة ٧٠٣ ـ غيث ٤٠٢ ـ مج ١٠/٥٦٩ ـ فخر ٣٢/ ١٩٧.
			٢) النّات	ـ(٢)	مختصر شواذ القراءات ١٨٣/ ـ همع الهوامع ٣/٢٩٥.
١٠٢٤٣	٤	ٱلْوَسْوَاسِ	الوِسواس	ـ	امع ٢/١٦٠.

(١) نسبت في مختصر ابن خالويه/١٨٣: إلى ورش.
(٢) حكى أبو عمرو: أنها لغة قضاعة.
قال ابن خالويه: زعم أهل اللغة في كتب القلب والإبدال: أن العرب تقول في الناس: النات، وقوم أكياث أي: أكياس.

اتحاف الفضلاء = اتف : الإعراب للنحاس = اعن ؛ الإملاء للعكبري = امع ؛ البحر المحيط = بحر ؛ التبيان للطوسي = تب ؛ التيسير للداني = يسر ؛ تفسير الطبري = طبر ؛ تفسير القرطبي = جامع ؛ الحجة لابن خالويه = حجل ؛ الحجة لأبي زرعة = حجز ؛ السبعة لابن مجاهد = سبعة ؛ الغيث للصفاقسي = غيث ؛ الكشاف للزمخشري = كشاف ؛ الكشف للقيسي = كشف ؛ المجمع للطبرسي = مج ؛ المحتسب لابن جني = مح ؛ المعاني للأخفش = معش ؛ المعاني للفراء = معف ؛ تفسير الرازي = فخر ؛ النشر لابن الجزري = نشر .

CONCLUSION. We began this article by considering this common Islamic claim:

> No other book in the world can match the Qur'an [...] The astonishing fact about this book of ALLAH is that it has remained unchanged, even to a dot, over the last fourteen hundred years. [...] No variation of text can be found in it. You can check this for yourself by listening to the recitation of Muslims from different parts of the world. (*Basic Principles of Islam*, p. 4)

This claim is wrong. All of the Islamic evidence shows there are different Qur'ans used around the world today. They differ in their words, basic letters, diacritical dots, vowels, and the Basmalah; and these change the meaning of words and sentences, and the number of words in the Qur'an. Not all Qur'ans are identical.

Islamic leaders should stop exaggerating about the Qur'an. If you are a Muslim, please do not believe or make these claims. If you are a Christian, do not believe these exaggerated claims.

This article only considers the different Qur'ans used in the world *today*. If you wish to learn about the different Qur'ans in Islam's early history then read The Preservation of the Qur'an.

APPENDIX 1 - HOW DO ISLAMIC SCHOLARS UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENT QIRA'AT?

The traditional Islamic view is that all of the authentic qira'at are from God, and the differences between them are to be harmonized.

> This oral tradition (of the Qur'an) embraces ten distinct systems of recitation, or, as they are generally called among scholars, "Readings" (qiraa'aat), each tranmitted by a "school" of Koran-readers deriving its authority from a prominent reader of the second or early third century of the Islamic era. The slight variation among the Ten Readings is attributable to the dialectal variation in the original Revelation. [...] It should be emphasized that all of the Readings were transmitted orally from the Prophet. (Labib as-Said, *The Recited Koran: A History of the First Recorded Version*, p. 53)

> Every reading in accordance with Arabic (grammar) even if (only) in some way, and in accordance with one of the *masaahif* of Uthmaan, even if (only) probable, and with sound chain of transmission, is a correct (Sahiih) reading, which must not be rejected, and may not be denied, but it belongs to the seven modes (ahruf) according to which the Qur'aan was revealed, and the people are obliged to accept it, no matter whether it is from the seven *Imaans*, or the ten or from other accepted *Imaans* (Abu-l-Khair bin al-Jazari; cited from Ahmad von Denffer, *Ulum Al-Qur'an*, p. 119.)

However, not all Islamic scholars hold this view. Some consider it unreasonable to think that the Qur'an can be recited ten different ways. They believe there is only one recitation of the Qur'an because the word Qur'an means recitation, and that the different qira'at come from the readers and not God.

> The Koran was originally recited in one language and one dialect, namely that of the Quraysh. However, as soon as readers from the different tribes began to recite it, a variety of readings emerged, reflecting dialectal differences among the readers. The diversity was so great that later generations of readers and scholars had to labor intensely over the recording and careful analysis of these readings. In so doing they give rise to a special science, or rather special sciences, devoted exclusively to this enterprise. [...]
> I should pause here to note that certain religious authorities have supposed that the Seven Readings were transmitted by a process of continuous transmission (*tawaatur*) on a wide scale from the Prophet himself, unto whom, so they allege, they were revealed by Gabriel. These authorities therefore consider that whoever rejects any of the established readings is an unbeliever. They have not, however, been able to produce any evidence for what they claim except that the tradition which reads, "The Koran was revealed in seven dialects (*ahruf*)".
> The truth of the matter is that the seven Readings had nothing to do with the Revelation, nothing in the least; and whoever rejects any of them is not for having done so an unbeliever; nor has he sinned or gone astray in his religion. The origin of these Readings is to be found in the diversity of tribal dialects among the early Muslim Arabs, and everyone has the right to dispute them, and to accept and reject them, or parts of them, as seems proper.
> In point of fact, people have disputed the Readings and argued over them, and have even accused each other of error with respect to them; yet we know of no Muslim who ever charged another with unbelief over this matter. (Taahaa Husayn, *Fi'l-Adab al-jaahilii*, cited from Labib as-Said, *The Recited Koran: A History of the First Recorded Version*, pp. 97&99)

> It is generally known that there are seven or ten different recitations of the Qur'an - By recitation

> is meant the different wordings which convey the same or allied meanings *Maalik* and *Malik* - Such as *Yatta'harna* and *Yat'harna*. It is generally believed the recitation of the seven or the ten reciters of the first, second and third century of Islam are valid and the Muslims are allowed to adopt either of these in their reciting Qur'an and it is generally held that the origin of these various recitations go back to the time of the Holy Prophet who approved these varieties but according to the Shia Ithna-Ashari School whose views are based on the teachings of the Holy Imams, the revealed recitation of the Qur'an cannot be but one and as the Imam puts it, "Qur'an is One, came down from the One, the variation in recitation comes from the reciters not from God." (S. V. Mir Ahmed Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*, p. 58a)

APPENDIX 2 - ARE THE QIRA'AT DIFFERNT VERSIONS?

Is it correct to call the different qira'at, "different versions". Yes, because the different qira'at are precisely what is meant by the word version. The *Oxford Languages* online dictionary defines 'version' as, "a particular form of something differing in certain respects from an earlier form or other forms of the same type of thing." This is precisely what Muslim leaders claim about the qira'at. They maintain there is *one* thing called the Qur'an and the qira'at are different forms of it. This is what the word version means.

APPENDIX 3 - ARE THE QIRA'AT DIFFERENT QUR'ANS?

Is it correct to call the qira'at, "different Qur'ans". Yes, because the word, *Qur'an*, means *recitation*, and each of the ten qira'at is a different recitation. There is not one recitation but ten, therefore, there is not one Qur'an but ten.

APPENDIX 4 - THE QUR'AN IS ORAL NOT WRITTEN

Some Muslims have told me that it doesn't matter if there are differences between the *written* Qur'ans because the Qur'an is firstly *oral* and only secondarily written. However, this is a false distinction for two reasons: firstly, the Qur'an says that it is written (Qur'an 80:11-15) just as it is memorised. Secondly, these written Qur'ans are meant to be an exact record of the oral recitation of the ten famous readers. Thus the differences between the written Qur'ans *are* the differences between the oral recitations.

APPENDIX 5 - THE ORIGIN OF THE TEN QIRA'AT - THE COMMON TRADITIONAL EXPLANATION

Why are there ten qira'at and not one? The common traditional Islamic answer comes from a hadith.

1. There is a hadith in which Muhammad said Allah gave the Qur'an in seven different ways (Arabic: ahruf).

> Narrated Umar bin Al-Khattab: [...] [Muhammad said] "This Qur'an has been revealed to be recited in seven different ways [ahruf], so recite of it whichever is easier for you." (*Sahih al-Bukhari* 4992; vol 6, bk 61, no 514)

2. These differences caused problems for the early Muslims.

> Narrated Anas bin Malik: Hudhaifa bin Al-Yaman came to Uthman at the time when the people [Muslims] of Syria and the people of Iraq were waging war to conquer Armenia and Azarbaijan. Hudhaifa was afraid of their [the Muslims from Syria and Iraq] differences in the recitation of the Qur'an, so he said to 'Uthman, "O chief of the Believers! Save this nation before they differ

about the Book (Quran)". (*Sahih al-Bukhari* 4987; vol 6, bk 61, no 510)

3. Caliph Uthman solved this problem by establishing one text and destroying the other Qur'ans. His goal was to remove the differences and unite the Muslim community around a single text recited in the Qurayshi dialect.

> So 'Uthman sent a message to Hafsa saying, "Send us the manuscripts of the Qur'an so that we may compile the Qur'anic materials in perfect copies and return the manuscripts to you." Hafsa sent it to 'Uthman. 'Uthman then ordered Zaid bin Thabit, 'Abdullah bin Az-Zubair, Said bin Al-As and 'AbdurRahman bin Harith bin Hisham to rewrite the manuscripts in perfect copies. 'Uthman said to the three Quraishi men, "In case you disagree with Zaid bin Thabit on any point in the Qur'an, then write it in the dialect of Quraish, the Qur'an was revealed in their tongue." They did so, and when they had written many copies, 'Uthman returned the original manuscripts to Hafsa. 'Uthman sent to every Muslim province one copy of what they had copied, and ordered that all the other Qur'anic materials, whether written in fragmentary manuscripts or whole copies, be burnt. (*Sahih al-Bukhari* 4987; vol 6, bk 61, no 510)

4. Uthman's Qur'an removed most of the differences, however, some were able to remain due to the ambiguous nature of the Arabic script that was used at this time.

> The [Arabic] script used in the seventh century, i.e. during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad, consisted of very basic symbols, which expressed only the consonantal structure of a word, and even that with much ambiguity. While today letters such as baa, taa, thaa, yaa, are easily distinguished by points, this was not so in the early days and all these letters used to be written with a straight line. (Von Denffer, *`Ulum Al-Qur'an - An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an*, 1994, p. 57)

The ambiguous nature of the script of Uthman's Qur'an allowed some qira'at/readings from the other ahruf to be transferred into Uthman's Qur'an. If a qira'at/reading from another ahruf was compatible with Uthman's text, it could continue to be recited in Uthman's Qur'an. In this case the dots and vowels were in different places on the one script. This resulted in different qira'at/readings being recited for the same word in Uthman's Qur'an. Thus, the reciting of the Qur'an was now a mixture of different ahruf that were compatiable with the Uthmanic text.

5. Without the dots to distinguish letters or the vowel markings, the Uthmanic Qur'an was ambiguous to Muslims whether they were Arab or not. This allowed new variants to arise as people interpreted the ambiguous text.

> When more and more Muslims of non-Arab origin and also many ignorant Arabs studied the Qur'an, faulty pronunciation and wrong readings began to increase. It is related that at the time of Du'ali (d. 69H/638) someone in Basra read the following *aya* from the Qur'an in a faulty way, which changed the meaning completely:
>
> > That God and his apostle dissolve obligations with the pagans (9:3)
> >
> > That God dissolves obligations with the pagans and the apostle.
>
> This mistake occurred through wrongly reading *rasulihi* in place of *rasuluhu*, which could not be distinguished from the written text, because there were no signs or accents indicating the correct pronunciation. Unless someone had memorised the correct version he could out of ignorance easily commit such a mistake. (Von Denffer, *`Ulum Al-Qur'an - An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an*, 1994, p. 58)

Islamic scholars record that at least 50 different qira'a/reading systems developed for Uthman's Qur'an.[3] These different qira'at show that a range of opinions existed as to how the Uthmanic text could be interpreted and read, and that there was some confusion about this. The Uthmanic text gave the Qur'an macrostability, but its ambiguous script led to microfluidity.

6. In the 4th Islamic century, Ahmad ibn Musa ibn Mujahid solved this problem by choosing seven of the qira'at as canonical, and in time another three were added. Reciting any of the non-canonical qira'at was now forbidden and punishable.

> Two Qur'an readers were famously tried for reciting unacceptable variants, Ibn Miqsam in 322/934 and Ibn Shannabudh in 323/935. Both were forced to recant. (Christopher Melchert, *Ibn Mujahid and the Establishment of the Seven Qur'anic Readings*, p. 5)

This is the common traditional explanation for how the seven ahruf became the ten qira'at.

There are four problems with this common traditional explanation about the seven ahruf and ten qira'at. Firstly, Islamic scholars do not know what the seven ahruf are.

> As for what is meant by these seven *ahruf*, there is a great deal of difference on this issue. Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276 A.H.) recorded thirty-five opinions on the issue, and as-Suyootee listed over forty. Ibn Sa'adan (d. 231 A.H.), a famous grammarian and reciter of the Qur'aan, even declared that the true meaning of the *ahruf* was known only to Allaah, and thus to attempt to investigate into this issue was futile! (Abu Ammaar Yasir Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'aan*, p. 175)

How can we say that the ten qira'at come only from the seven ahruf if we do not know what the ahruf are?

Secondly, there are ten qira'at not seven, and Muhammad is supposed to have allowed seven not ten different ways.

Thirdly, if Muhammad did allow the Qur'an to be recited in seven different ways, then his closest companions would have continued Muhammad's sunna/practice. Instead, Uthman does the opposite. He standardises one text in the Qurayshi dialect and tries to remove all the other ways.

Fourthly, the Qur'an never says it can be recited in seven or ten different ways. It only speaks of itself as one.

For these reasons the common traditional explanation does not seem authentic. However, there is an alternative traditional explanation which is outlined in the next appendix.

APPENDIX 6 - THE ORIGIN OF TEN QIRA'AT - AN ALTERNATIVE TRADITIONAL EXPLANATION

The alternative explanation does not begin with the hadith about the seven ahruf, but with the Qur'an. The Qur'an says that some parts of it were forgotten, but this was Allah's will.

> We will make you recite, [O Muhammad], and you will not forget, except what Allah should will. (Qur'an 87:6-7)

> We do not abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten except that We bring forth [one] better than it or similar to it. (Qur'an 2:106)

This is also taught in the Hadith.

> Narrated Aisha: The Prophet heard a man reciting the Qur'an in the mosque and said, "May Allah bestow His Mercy on him, as he has reminded me of such-and-such verses of such a Surah." (*Sahih al-Bukhari* 5037; vol 6, bk 61, no 556)
>
> 'A'isha reported that the Apostle of Allah (may peace be upon him) listened to the recitation of the Qur'an by a man in the mosque. Thereupon he said: May Allah have mercy upon him; be reminded me of the verse which I had been made to forget. (*Sahih Muslim* 788b; bk 4, 1721)
>
> Narrated Abdullah ibn Mas'ud: [...] [Muhammad said] I am only a human being and I forget just as you do; so when I forget, remind me. (*Sahih al-Bukhari* 401; vol 1, bk 8, no 394)

The effect of Muslims forgetting parts of the Qur'an is that the Qur'an was recited differently. This is seen in the following hadiths.

> Abu Harb b. Abu al-Aswad reported on the authority of his father that Abu Musa al-Ash'ari sent for the reciters of Basra. They came to him and they were three hundred in number. They recited the Qur'an and he said: You are the best among the inhabitants of Basra, for you are the reciters among them. So continue to recite it. (But bear in mind) that your reciting for a long time may not harden your hearts as were hardened the hearts of those before you. We used to recite a surah which resembled in length and severity to (Surah 9) Bara'at. I have, however, forgotten it with the exception of this which I remember out of it: "If there were two valleys full of riches, for the son of Adam, he would long for a third valley, and nothing would fill the stomach of the son of Adam but dust." And we used to recite a surah which resembled one of the surahs of Musabbihat, and I have forgotten it, but remember (this much) out of it: "Oh people who believe, why do you say that which you do not practise" (Q61:2) and "that is recorded in your necks as a witness (against you) and you would be asked about it on the Day of Resurrection" (Q17:13). (*Sahih Muslim* 1050; bk 5, no 2286)
>
> Ibn Abbas reported [... Umar said] Allah sent Muhammad (saw) with the Truth and revealed the Holy Book to him, and among what Allah revealed, was the verse of the Rajam (stoning for adultery) and we did recite this verse and understood and memorized it. Allah's Apostle did carry out the punishment of stoning and so did we after him. I am afraid that after a long time has passed, somebody will say, "By Allah, we do not find the verse of the Rajam in Allah's Book", and thus they will go astray by leaving an obligation which Allah has revealed. [...] And then we used to recite among the Verses in Allah's Book: "O people! Do not claim to be the offspring of other than your fathers, as it is disbelief (unthankfulness) on your part that you claim to be the offspring of other than your real father." (*Sahih al-Bukhari* 6830; vol 8, bk 82, no 817)

Sahih Muslim 1050 shows that entire surahs have been forgotten after Muhammad's death. Sahih al-Bukhari 6830 shows two verses that had been forgotten. This led to the Qur'an being being recited differently after Muhammad's death. What does this have to do with the ten qira'at?

The types of differences between the qira'at are precisely the differences that happen when words in the Qur'an are forgotten, when there is a disruption of knowledge. When Uthman made his text for the Qur'an it did not have the dots to distinguish between letters, nor the vowel markings; it was an ambiguous text that served only as a guide. This is not a problem when the Qur'an is memorised because the correct letters and vowels are known from memory. But if some words are forgotten, then the ambiguous text for these words needs to be interpreted and the dots and vowel markings added as the interpreter/reader thinks correct. This is precisely what we see in the ten qira'at. The differences between them are where the ambiguous Uthmanic text has been interpreted differently and the dots and vowels placed in different places. This explanation of the ten qira'at comes from the Qur'an, Hadith, and from understanding the ambiguous nature of Uthman's Qur'an. It is a better explanation than the seven ahruf.

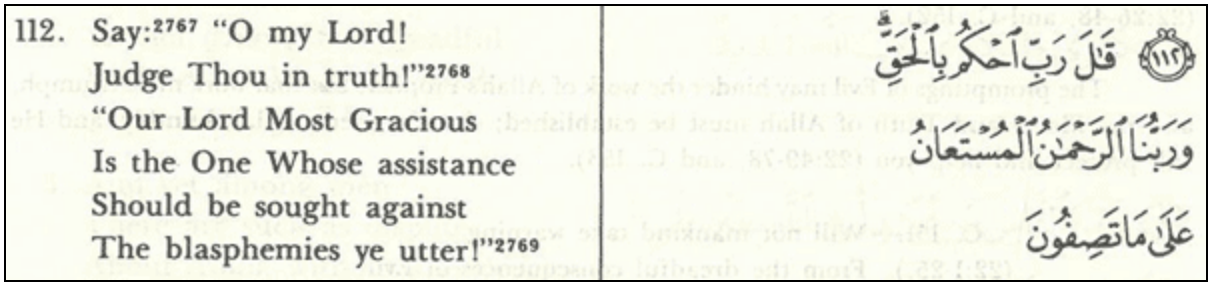
Therefore, the differences between the ten qira'at come from some words being forgotten and the readers having to interpret what the word may have been. Appendix 1 refers to scholars who hold to this explanation.

APPENDIX 7 - CHOOSING THE BEST QIRA'A - ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP IN PRACTICE

As we have seen in appendix 1, the traditional Islamic understanding is that all of the authentic qira'at are from God. Now scholars can say these things but what they do reveals what they truly believe. This is the case for Abdullah Yusuf Ali who made one of the most famous and widely used English translations of the Qur'an.

Yusuf Ali based his translation on the Hafs qira'a, however, he consulted other qira'at, and sometimes used a different qira'a at certain points in his translation. That is, he chose from among the qira'at the reading that made the best sense.

We see this with his translation and footnote for sura 21:112. Below are scans from *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, 4th ed., Brentwood, Md., U.S.A.: Amana Corp., 1989, by Abdullah Yusuf Ali:



112. Say:[2767] "O my Lord!
Judge Thou in truth!"[2768]
"Our Lord Most Gracious
Is the One Whose assistance
Should be sought against
The blasphemies ye utter!"[2769]

قَٰلَ رَبِّ ٱحۡكُم بِٱلۡحَقِّۗ ﴿١١٢﴾
وَرَبُّنَا ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنُ ٱلۡمُسۡتَعَانُ
عَلَىٰ مَا تَصِفُونَ

2767. See above, n. 2666 to 21:4. The beter reading is "Say" in the imperative, rather than "He (the Prophet) said (or says)" in the indicative mood. Note that, on that construction, there are three distinct things which the Prophet is asked to say: *viz.*: (1) the statement in verses 109-11, addressed to those who turn away from the Message; (2) the prayer addressed to Allah in the first part of verse 112; and (3) the advice given indirectly to the Believers, in the second part of verse 112. I have marked these divisions by means of inverted commas.

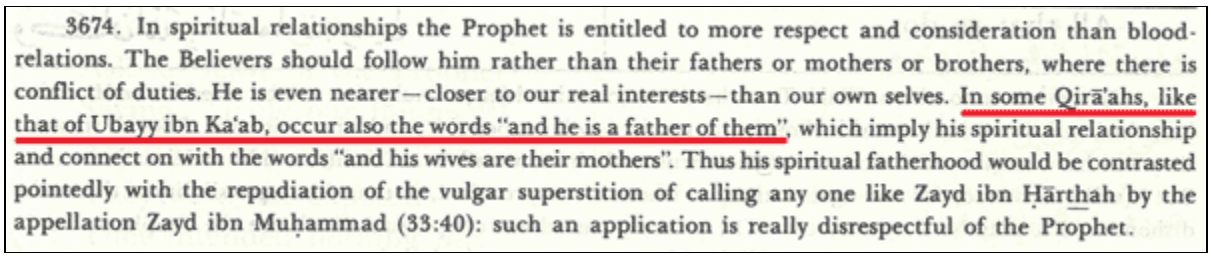
What has Yusuf Ali done in translating sura 21:112? The Arabic text displayed in his translation is the Hafs version, and it reads *qaala* (He said), however, Yusuf Ali has followed the majority of the qira'at which read *qul* (Say). The reason he gives for using a different qira'a is:

> 2767. [...] The beter (sic) reading is "Say" in the imperative, rather than "He (the Prophet) said (or says)" in the indicative mood.

That is, he believes the Warsh qira'a, along with others, give a better reading and so translates according to them. He does this again for sura 21:4, and explains that his decision has the support of other Islamic scholars:

> 2666. [...] But more than one Commentator understands the meaning in the imperative, and I agree with them.

Choosing the best reading occurs throughout his translation. We see it again for sura 23:112 with the choice explained in footnote 2948, and a highly significant choice occurs in sura 33:6 with the following explanation:



3674. In spiritual relationships the Prophet is entitled to more respect and consideration than blood-relations. The Believers should follow him rather than their fathers or mothers or brothers, where there is conflict of duties. He is even nearer—closer to our real interests—than our own selves. In some Qirā'ahs, like that of Ubayy ibn Ka'ab, occur also the words "and he is a father of them", which imply his spiritual relationship and connect on with the words "and his wives are their mothers". Thus his spiritual fatherhood would be contrasted pointedly with the repudiation of the vulgar superstition of calling any one like Zayd ibn Ḥārthah by the appellation Zayd ibn Muḥammad (33:40): such an application is really disrespectful of the Prophet.

Here we see that the reading/qira'a of Ubayy ibn Ka'ab has these extra words: "and he is a father of them". This means Ubayy ibn Ka'ab recited sura 33:6 as follows:

> The Prophet is closer to the Believers than their own selves, and he is a father of them and his wives are their mothers. (Qur'an 33:6)

This difference has an enormous affect on the meaning: Should Muslims consider Muhammad their father or not? In this case Yusuf Ali seems to accept both readings as valid but chooses not to include Ubayy ibn Ka'ab's reading as part of his translation.

The Islamic scholar, Alan Jones, like Yusuf Ali, explains how he has selected the best reading for his translation of the Qur'an.

> The basic text used for this translation is that of the Egyptian standard edition, first issued in 1342/1923 and revised in 1381/1960 and subsequently. This is the most widely used text. It had it origins in the Iraqi city of Kufa in the second century of the Islamic era, and is technically known as the Hafs recension of the `Asim reading. Very rarely I have preferred a somewhat more conservative reading that originated in Medina: Warsh's recension of Nafi's reading. There is a note when I have done so. The notes also refer from time to time to the readings of one of the Companions of the Prophet, `Abdallah Ibn Mas'ud. (Alan Jones, *The Qur'an - Translated into English*, p. 19)

What these examples demonstrate is that Islamic scholars, in practice, do not treat all of the qira'at/readings as equally valid but instead choose the best reading from among them. It is not sensible to believe that God gave the Qur'an with thousands of variants; and it is quite reasonable for Islamic scholars to choose the best reading from.

Christians do not have a problem with Islamic scholars doing this because this is something Christian scholars do with variant readings in the Bible. But Christians do have a problem when Muslims claim that all the qira'at/readings are revelation when in practice Islamic scholars do not treat them this way.

APPENDIX 8 - ARE THE ISNADS OF THE QIRA'AT RELIABLE?

As we saw in appendix 1, the traditional Muslim belief is that each of the ten accepted qira'at, as a whole, can be traced perfectly back to Muhammad. The *isnad* is the list of names of those who it is believed passed this qira'a from Muhammad. Thus the claim is that the whole of the Hafs Qur'an, in this form, can be traced back to Muhammad. However, the relationship between the seven ahruf and ten qira'at makes the authenticity of these isnads problematic.

As we saw earlier, Uthman destroyed most of the differences between the ahruf, and only those readings/qira'at that were compatible with his basic text were able to remain. This means that the ten qira'at based on Uthman's Qur'an are a *mixture* of qira'at from various ahruf and not a continuous whole qira'a going back to Muhammad. It is this mixture that allows the seven to become ten. If a Qur'an is a mixture of qira'at then it requires a separate isnad for each part of the mixture. Yet the Hafs and Warsh Qur'ans do not identify the

different ahruf in them and give them an individual isnad. Instead, one isnad is given for the whole qira'at, which is not possible.

The isnads for the ten canonical Qur'ans cannot go back to Muhammad, instead, they can only go back to the ten readers who interpreted the Uthmanic text.

APPENDIX 9 - WHERE TO VIEW AND BUY DIFFERENT ARABIC QUR'ANS

Any Islamic bookshop should be able to order these Qur'ans for you. They are also available online and from the following suppliers.

- Bridges' Translation of the Ten *Qira'at* of the Noble Qur'an
- Easy Quran Store (UK) - Individual Qur'an Versions
- Easy Quran Store (UK) - 10 Version Qur'an
- The Islamic Bookstore (Australia) - 10 Version Qur'an
- Neel Wa Furat - 10 Version Qur'an
- Iqra Shop - Imam Qunbol Version, Imam Warsh Version
- 14 Qira'at Online
- Qur'an Flash - Several versions of the Qur'an available for download.

ENDNOTES

[1] Subhii al-Saalih, *Muhaahith fii `Ulum al-Qur'aan*, Beirut: Daar al-`Ilm li al-Malaayiin, 1967, pp. 109ff.

[2] *Mu'jam al-qiraa'aat al-Quraaneeyah, ma'a maqaddimah fee qiraa'aat wa ashhar al-qurraa*, Prepared by Ahmad Omar and Abdelal Makram, Egypt, Cairo: Alam Al Kotob, third edition, vols. 1-6, 1997, vol. 5, p. 521.

[3] Al-Nadim, *The Fihrist of al-Nadim - A Tenth Century survey of Muslim Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, pp. 63-71. Also, Ibn al-JazarT, *Nashr*, vol. 1, pp. 34-7, cited from, Intisar A. Rabb, "Non-Canonical Readings of the Qur'an: Recognitition and Authenticity (the Himsi Reading)", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 2006, vol. 8, no. 2, p. 124, footnote 114.

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